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XI.—*On the Esquimaux.* By DR. RAE.

[*Read March 21st, 1865.*]

THE deep interest which always has been and continues to be felt by ethnologists in the origin, habits, manners, customs, etc., of the Esquimaux, is the only excuse I have to offer for bringing the present paper before this learned society.

There are few races of men about whom a greater diversity of opinion has been expressed than the Esquimaux. By some writers they have been described as stupid, slow, dirty, lazy, false, and idle ; in fact little, if at all, raised above the brute creation. By others, who possibly may have had opportunities of seeing these people on a different part of the coast in all their different relations to each other, in their every day life and at all seasons of the year (for winter is the time when the Esquimaux is seen to most advantage, and winter with him forms two-thirds or three-fourths of the year), a higher position among their fellow-men has been assigned to them.

Having visited the Danish settlements in Greenland, Churchill in Hudson's Bay, the mouths of the Coppermine and McKenzie rivers on the Arctic Coast, and passed two seasons at Repulse Bay, and seen the Esquimaux at all these places, I had opportunities of noticing and comparing their peculiarities.

The lands southward of Churchill in latitude 59° N. being claimed by the Indians, the Esquimaux do not go south of that place, and those who trade there, may be considered as partially civilised, as they have in part assumed European dress and habits, and are employed by the Hudson's Bay Company on various services requiring care and attention, which they perform in a satisfactory manner. They are sober, steady, and faithful ; generally speaking, honest, and never begging, as is the practice of the Red Indian ; comparatively speaking, provident of their own property, and careful of that of others when under their charge. This latter quality is specially evinced by the manner in which they preserve a large boat lent to them by the company to enable them to get along the coast with facility when going to or returning from their hunting grounds. This boat is provided with sail, anchor, and cable, and all other requisites, and is managed by them with the skill of experienced boatmen. At the beginning of winter it is hauled on shore, securely docked, and altogether better cared for than if in the hands of the Company's regular *employées*.

The hunting lands and waters of these extend about five degrees, or 350 English miles, north of Churchill, but they do not permit their more distant countrymen to visit that place, preferring to barter all their own half-worn weapons, tools, cooking utensils, etc., with these, at a much higher price than would be paid for new articles at the trading post, and thus secure a double profit.

The natives are said to be increasing in number on this part of the coast, partly, I suppose, because at Churchill, as at all the Hudson's Bay Company's posts where it can be done, an extra stock of provisions is specially kept, to provide against starvation in seasons of scarcity, to which all places in Northern America are exposed, where animal food forms the sole means of subsistence of the natives. These provisions are always given away or sent to a distance gratuitously when required.

During the season of 1846-7, which I spent at Repulse Bay, we saw much of the natives during the whole time of our stay of twelve months; on the second visit in 1853-4 they were constantly with us for about three months, and I came away on the second occasion with even a better opinion of them than I had done on the first. On both occasions I had a competent interpreter.

With a few exceptions, these people are short of stature, but not dwarfish, being well and powerfully built, long bodied, exhibiting great strength in lifting weights (which I tested to the extent of about 336 pounds), and much activity in running and leaping. Their expression of face was pleasing, foreheads low and broadish, cheek bones high, features rather flat, and the inner angle of the eye points slightly downwards, in the manner commonly noticed in the eyes of the Chinese. With the exception of two instances in which it was fine and wavy, the hair is straight, black and coarse, cut short on the men, who, generally speaking, have not much beard.

The women have very small hands and feet, and when young are plump, solid little creatures, with ruddy agreeable faces, and very fine teeth. Their faces, hands and arms, are always more or less tattooed, and their hair is long and dressed in a peculiar manner, being collected in two bunches, one on each side of the head, and a piece of stick eight or ten inches long by half-an-inch thick being placed among it, a strip of party-coloured deer skin is wound round the whole in a spiral form, and this hangs down on each side of the face. They each carry an ivory comb of native make. Two suits of reindeer skin form the winter dress of both sexes, the dress next the body having the hair inwards, the outside dress with the hair outwards, and which is generally taken off when in doors. The man's dress consists of coat with hood and long flap or tail behind, knee breeches which are met at

the knee by long seal skin boots, and warm deer skin mitts. The woman's dress differs, in that the hood of the coat is large enough to carry a child, and that there is a small flap before as well as at the back of the coat, and in the boots being very wide, coming high up and fastened with a string at the girdle. These immense boots give the women a most ungainly appearance when either walking or running. The summer dress is usually made of seal skin or an old winter dress.

In summer and autumn, or for a period of about four months, from the beginning of June to the end of September, the natives live in tents, which are of two kinds, the one thin and light for warm weather, the other made of deer skin with the hair on, for autumn and early winter, before the snow becomes sufficiently hard packed for house-building, which takes place in October, at which time they move into winter quarters.

The form and mode of construction of the snow house have been so often mentioned that it is almost unnecessary for me to describe it. There is, however, one peculiarity which has not been generally noticed. In a well-built house, the platform of snow that serves as a bed, is always raised above the level of the top of the door, so that the occupants are in the warmer air near the roof and above the cool draft from the door. They also understand perfectly that a house made of ice is colder than one made of snow, for when, in our ignorance or thoughtlessness, we were about to throw water over a snow house that had been built for an observatory, with the idea of making it more air tight, they said, "don't do that, you will make the house cold."

Towards spring, when about to build a snow house, in which they are to live some time, they invariably, when possible, select a deep drift bank of snow, and dig down several feet to get to what they called "warm snow," before building. This "warm snow" had a peculiar rough granular appearance, and must have had great advantages as a building material, otherwise they would not have gone through a great deal of additional, and to me apparently unnecessary, labour, to reach it. Under ordinary circumstances, a snow house large enough for five or six persons can be built in an hour, sometimes less.

Their principal and favourite food is venison and musk ox beef, the latter being preferred, probably because it is generally fatter, and they like the musky flavour. This meat is usually eaten raw, and with it some of the contents of the stomach of the animal, a frozen lump of which is usually seen in every snow house.

The musk ox, after being brought to bay by dogs, is either speared or shot with bows and arrows. The reindeer, on which they place their principal reliance, both for food and

clothing, is killed in three ways. During the southern migration in autumn, they are chased in kayaks and speared whilst swimming across lakes. In this manner great numbers are obtained, sufficient for the whole winter's stock of provisions, as was the case in 1846-7, if the frost does not set in too early, for in that case the lakes freeze over during the migrating season, and the deer are able to cross the lakes on the ice. They are also shot with bows and arrows, and many are caught in pitfalls dug in the snow, which are neatly covered with thin slabs of the same material. The deer are attracted to these pits by tufts of moss placed to windward, the wind being principally from west or north west. I may here notice that the wolf is also caught in pitfalls, but made much deeper, which after being covered over, is surrounded by a low wall over which the wolf has to leap before he can get to a bait placed inside, when his weight breaks through the thin covering and he tumbles in. Were the walls not built, the wolf, in his low, cautious approach, would, by the hollow sound underneath, become aware of his danger and avoid it.

In spring, after the seals come up on the ice, they are approached in a most ingenious manner and killed with a spear or harpoon,* a feat which none of my party (one or two of whom were expert hunters) could accomplish even with the advantage of guns, as the seal on these occasions is most wary, and it is only a very correct imitation of his appearance and movements that can deceive him.

In July the sea ice breaks up near shore, and then salmon for a time form the chief food of the natives. These they enclose by building a slight wall of stones at about half tide mark round the outlet of a small stream, to which these fish resort at high water. When the tide ebbs they remain enclosed, and are then speared, sometimes in great quantities.

During the summer they subsist on wild fowl, deer, and musk cattle, and occasionally bear, walrus, and whale. For killing the two latter, heavy harpoons and extra strong lines are prepared. They generally eat fish, venison, and musk ox beef raw, but prefer seal or walrus flesh cooked. This taste may possibly have been acquired by necessity. Whenever the seal, walrus, and whale are killed, their flesh can be cooked by burning their own oil, but neither reindeer nor musk ox are generally fat enough for this purpose.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Esquimaux must of neces-

* The Repulse Bay natives do not usually kill the seal in winter, unless forced to do so by their not having made a successful deer-hunt in the autumn. This was the case in 1853-4, when they killed seals in Pelly Bay.

sity have fuel to enable them to procure water to drink. They can pass months, if not the whole winter, without a lamp or fire of any kind. Lakes of good water are abundant, and knowing where these are, they always, when necessary, build their houses on or near one of them. An ice chisel and small scoop of musk ox horn attached to a long handle, are indispensable parts of their travelling equipment, and the quickness with which they can cut a hole through five or six feet of ice is surprising. Their ice chisels were to be sure in beautiful order, more like the tools of a careful and natty carpenter than anything else, and were much superior to ours in the ease with which they chipped the ice. Those we saw on this occasion were formed of pieces of old whale harpoon or lance, ship's bolts, one of them copper or composition, etc., obtained in barter probably from natives living further north, or from Sir J. Ross's vessel, the *Victoria*, abandoned in Regent's Inlet many years before. I only once saw an ice chisel made of stone. It was further to the west, but unfortunately I did not secure it.

The Esquimaux take their principal meal immediately before going to bed, and when supplied with food in the morning they usually kept the larger part for the evening, which was then portioned out in a most impartial manner on a clean parchment deer skin, round which men, women and children sat and ate together. The meat being venison was always preferred raw and frozen.* When they do cook, it is by means of the stone kettles and lamps so often described.

I noticed that the lamp was so admirably managed by the good wife of the house (under whose special care it seemed to be), that each wick of moss gave only a small flame indeed, but bright as gas, and not a trace of smoke appeared. This I tested frequently with a bit of glass, although such test was unnecessary, the fact being indicated by the perfectly pure white of the snow walls of the hut after it had been months inhabited. The smoke from the ordinary lamps, such as we used, with a cotton wick, tinged the walls and soiled our hands, faces, and clothes in a very short time, so that we did not look nearly so clean as our neighbours.

Their principal weapons, tools, and domestic utensils are, bows and arrows, the former made of pieces of wood or deer horn very neatly joined together and strengthened at the back with plaited sinew; seal and walrus harpoons, with line and inflated seal skin attached, smaller harpoon for the lesser seal, shears, lances for killing deer and wild fowl, fish spears and fish hooks; daggers

* I did not perceive that they were much greater eaters than Europeans would be under similar circumstances.

of iron, knives made of hoop iron and other material, snow knives of ivory or bone, snow shovel of wood edged with bone, peculiar saw or groover, drill bow and drill, ice chisel, etc., etc.

The woman's specialities are the cooking and other domestic apparatus, consisting of stone kettles and lamp, lamp moss, fire bag (containing dry grass, wild cotton, and pieces of iron pyrites), a small piece of stone, bone, or ivory about six inches long and half-an-inch thick, for arranging the lamp wicks whilst burning; needles and needle case, thimble of ivory, bone, or leather (which is worn on the fore-finger), sinews for thread, semi-circular knife, scraper for cleaning skins, ladles and spoons made of musk ox horn, buckets of stout seal's skin for carrying water, pieces of bone or ivory, generally curved in shape, pointed sharply at one end and sometimes ornamented at the other, used as a fork for various purposes, such as putting meat into, or taking it out of, the kettle, lifting a piece of blubber into the lamp, etc. Marrow spoons made of bone, several of which are usually carried at the woman's girdle ready for immediate use should a deer or musk ox be killed, the fresh and uncooked marrow from which is justly considered a great delicacy.

Socially the Esquimaux are a lively, cheerful, and chatty people, fond of associating with each other and with strangers, with whom they soon become on friendly terms, if kindly treated. Some of them, whilst living near us, were continually in our tents or house, and gave wonderfully little trouble, and whenever they saw either myself or men about to take our meals, they, with an amount of good breeding scarcely to be looked for, immediately got up and prepared to go away. They are also hospitable, for they always prepared food, when they had any, for their visitors.

Their principal amusement in the fine summer weather is a game at ball, which is played in the following manner. Twelve, twenty, thirty, or more persons, divide into partners of two, and are then formed in a circle, the partners being placed opposite to each other. A ball is then tossed from one to the other, which every one attempts to get hold of before it reaches the person for whom it is intended; both men and women play at this game, and my men became very fond of it.

In their domestic relations they are exemplary. The man is an obedient son, a good husband and a kind father, nor did I notice a single instance of harshness either to wife or child. The wife is treated as an equal, and indeed generally rules the establishment, which are said to be *signs of civilisation*.

On meeting a family, the man generally first introduces himself by name, patting his breast, then brings forward his wife, and afterwards his children according to age, naming each in turn, and his face fairly beams with pleasure as small presents

are made to them ; although when a present is made to himself, he almost invariably offers something in return, and sometimes expresses his regret that he has nothing more valuable to give.

The women showed great affection for their babies—I particularly mention this, because a very common opinion prevails that they will give away their child in exchange for a knife, file, or other trifle. This mistake has arisen from the mother having pointed to her child and then to the present given herself, meaning, thereby, that you were to give something to the child as well.

The children when young are docile, old-fashioned little creatures. The girls have their dolls, in making dresses and shoes for which they amuse and employ themselves. The boys have their miniature bows, arrows, and spears, with which they hunt the marmot and other small game ; little sledges, to which they harness the puppy dogs and train them to haul. In summer they practise the construction of stone caches and crescent-shaped places of concealment for the hunter when watching deer, and in winter the building of snow houses. They thus, whilst amusing themselves, are undergoing a course of education preparing them for their future duties.

When grown up they are dutiful and kind to their parents ; so much is this known to be the case, that a large family is considered a great boon, as the old people have then more certainty of being well cared for when they become unable to hunt for themselves. I shall mention one case in illustration of this. The “old man” of the party at Repulse Bay expressed a wish to see his birth-place before he died. His son (who, having a wife, if not two, and several children to provide for, could ill afford to lose so much time), immediately, and with apparent cheerfulness, harnessed his dogs to a sledge, placed his aged father upon it, and took him to the place he wished to visit, which was distant some days’ journey. In a similar position an Indian would probably have laughed at his father’s request, or, if complied with, have left him there to die. Orphan children are readily adopted and well cared for until they are able to provide for themselves or to assist those who have adopted them.

Generally speaking, I consider the Esquimaux truthful, and that they have the faculty of communicating from one to another any information they may obtain with peculiar accuracy. My position at Repulse Bay gave me a good opportunity of testing this. All the Esquimaux there had heard of, and one or two when young had seen Sir J. Ross’s ship, which was shut up by ice in Regent’s Inlet from 1829 to 1832, and abandoned there. Also Sir Edward Parry’s ships at Igloohill in Fury and Hecla Strait in 1822-3. They so minutely described the appearance of

the commanders of these ships, and also of Sir James Ross, that I could readily recognise them. They told me of various incidents noted in the published journals of these gentlemen with accuracy, and of other events of minor importance not recorded, but which I mentioned to Sir Edward Parry, Sir John and Sir James Ross, on my return, and they acknowledged them to be true.

When dates or numbers are required it is difficult, I should say almost impossible, to obtain very correct information. If only a few years have elapsed, they cannot tell with any degree of certainty on which year any particular event had occurred, although they can tell the season with very considerable accuracy, by referring to the breaking up of the ice in the spring, the migrations of the deer either south or north, or the setting in of winter. As to numbers, if an Esquimaux is asked how many children he has, he will have to puzzle over the question and count on his fingers for a while, before he can give an answer, and probably consult his wife if she is present, and *they* sometimes differ,—the number of the children being not more than four or five. If the numbers are large, such as a herd of deer, crew of a ship, etc., they will desire several persons to hold up their hands with the fingers spread out, and say there is “about so many,” or at “least so many.”

When Esquimaux are met, who probably have never seen white people before, and with whom you remain only a short time, it is almost impossible to obtain correct information of any kind from them. Nor is this to be wondered at, as they are on those occasions in a great state of excitement, which might fairly be compared to the condition of a peasant fresh from the country during a first visit to London at the time of some great public demonstration.

The Esquimaux are as a rule truthful, but there are two cases in which they were addicted to tell falsehoods, but these were usually so evident as to be easily seen through and to some extent excusable. These instances were when their favourite hunting-grounds lay in the direction in which we intended to travel, or when they had “caches” of provisions or other articles on the way. They would then tell all sorts of improbable tales to induce us to follow another road, such as, that the snow was bad and would not produce water fit to drink; that there were no lakes, that there were steep rocks and hills on the way; that we would see neither Esquimaux nor game, and that we should starve; and other stories to the same effect. They could not believe that the only cause for our coming so far to visit their lands was to explore a coast or search for our lost countrymen; but that we were in search of food also, and they knew that with our guns we should either kill or drive away the musk cattle and deer

(on which perhaps their very existence depended both for food and clothing) from these hunting-grounds, and probably rob their caches also.

At first it was difficult to make them understand that when presents were made them nothing was expected in return, and they always expressed by looks and actions, if not by words, their gratitude and thanks for kindness, particularly when shown to their wives, children, or parents. I shall mention one instance in illustration of their gratitude, a feeling almost unknown among the Red Indians. In the spring the young people had to go to some distance to kill seals, and before leaving requested permission for some half dozen of the old men and women to pitch their tents near us, so as in a manner to be under our protection. To this I readily agreed, and also promised to supply them with food should our means permit. As the hunters of my party killed game enough, this we were enabled to do, but I had either to go or send a man to the tents of the old people to find out if they wanted anything, for I believe they would have almost starved sooner than beg. When the Esquimaux hunters returned from a successful seal hunt, two or three of them came with the interpreter to thank me for our kindness to their parents, and on being told that we wished to buy some seal's fat from them, said that we had been so good to them that they would not sell, but give us as much as we wanted for nothing. Every morning afterwards a large piece of seal's blubber was placed at the door of the cooking tent by some one of the natives, until they were told we had as much as we required.

As far as I could learn, or can remember, their marriage ceremony is very simple. Little girls of six or seven are frequently betrothed to stout young fellows of eighteen or twenty, who take pleasure in pointing out their little fiancées to a stranger. When the child has arrived at womanhood, some presents are made to her parents by the husband, and she is taken to his tent or snow-house.

Polygamy is permitted, but in no instance that I met with had a man more than two wives; there were one or two cases where a woman had two husbands. It is said that wives are sometimes exchanged or lent for a time, with the hope of thereby promoting an increase of family.

They believe in a good and bad spirit, and in a future state of happiness or misery. Their ideal heaven being beautiful hunting-grounds and seas, teeming with all their favourite animal life, and the means of every kind of pleasure and enjoyment; their place of future punishment being in every respect the reverse. They propitiate the evil spirit to prevent him injuring them, as they believe the great spirit to be too beneficent to do so. The

stars are supposed to be the spirits of the dead, and the aurora and meteors are these spirits visiting each other in the heavens.

Their tradition of the formation of the sun and moon is, that not long after the world was formed, a great conjuror or angikak became so powerful that he could ascend into the heavens when he pleased, and on one occasion took with him a beautiful sister whom he loved very much, and also some fire, to which he added great quantities of fuel, and thus formed the sun. For a time the conjuror treated his sister with great kindness and they lived happily together, but at last he became cruel, ill used her in many ways, and as a climax burnt one side of her face with fire. After this last indignity she ran away from him and became the moon. Her brother in the sun has been in chase of her ever since, but although he sometimes gets near will never overtake her. When new moon the burnt side of her face is towards the earth, when full moon the reverse is the case.

Not having my rough notes by me I am unable to speak with certainty of the ceremonies (if any) gone through when a child is born or when a person dies. In the latter case, when a body is buried, if a man the feet of the corpse are pointed towards the sea, if a woman in the opposite direction. No grave is dug, this being a difficult, nay, almost an impossible task (without very strong tools) in the frozen ground, but the dead are placed on the surface and neatly covered up with stones. The Esquimaux have an awe or dread of encamping near to a grave or burying ground. They appear to have no recognised or hereditary chief, but usually some elderly man, more brave, wise, and a better hunter than the others, is recognised as a leader among them. They say that their numbers are decreasing, more especially of late years, many having died from a disease resembling by their description influenza, also from starvation.

On my second visit to Repulse Bay in 1853-4, when enquiring by name about old friends, I learnt that about fifty of them (men, women and children) had perished for want of food some years before. Some details of their sufferings were mentioned which were very sad. Shi-makuk, the conjuror, who I noticed had always shown great love for his wife and children, being unable to endure the sight of their sufferings, went out of his snow-house and strangled himself. Another man, whose name I forget, but who was remarkable among them for his height, being above five feet ten inches, driven to madness by the pangs of hunger, stripped off his coats, and rushing into the cold, allowed himself to be frozen to death. Two women, the only survivors of this party, as far as I could learn, saved themselves by having recourse to cannibalism. One of these (who in 1847 was a fine-looking and very young married woman) was at Repulse Bay in

1854, but she was not in good health, and seemed to be looked upon with some degree of disgust and pity by the other Esquimaux. There were a few, but very few, exceptions to the general good conduct of the natives of Repulse Bay. A small number of the younger people were addicted to petty theft, and two, or perhaps three of the men were bad characters, feared and disliked by their countrymen, and to whom I had to give a lesson that effectually kept them quiet as regarded ourselves during our stay.

That they are a well-disposed people may be inferred from the fact that for some weeks a number of families, with at least twelve grown men, had been encamped beside the three persons left in charge of our property at winter quarters, and although this property was placed on the rocks and protected by an oil-cloth only, not an article was touched or stolen, nor the slightest annoyance given to my men, although sometimes only one of them could remain at home. When the snow thawed about our winter huts in spring, many articles that had been lost, mislaid, or thrown aside, came into view. When the natives found any of these, they were brought to us to find out if we required them.

In the years 1848, 1849, and 1851, I had opportunities of seeing the Esquimaux that frequent the neighbourhood of the Coppermine River. These resembled in most points the natives of Repulse Bay, being gentle and courteous in their manner, but, physically speaking, a finer tribe. Several of the men were of good stature, being five feet ten or five feet eleven inches high, and two of them had brown hair and blue or grey eyes, giving indications of a mixed race, the origin of which I could not trace. The women, with a few exceptions, were too much afraid to show themselves, and when Sir John Richardson in 1848 entered one of the tents he found that they had begrimed their heads and faces with mud and dust with the view I fancy of preventing us being captivated by their charms and carrying them off, for we were then a formidable party of twenty or more. In 1851 they were much less timid.

Nearly all the tools and weapons of these people are formed of native copper, neatly hammered into knives, daggers, spear, lance, and arrow heads. We could not discover that they had any communication with the Esquimaux far either to the east or west of them, and we saw nothing that could be traced to having been obtained from the natives of Back's Great Fish River (except, perhaps, their stone kettles), or from those of the McKenzie, whom they seem to know by report as fierce and warlike, and of whom they were afraid. They were shy and rather timid at first, which may reasonably be accounted for by remembrance of the story of the horrible massacres of their ancestors by the

northern Indians at the Bloody Fall in 1771, at which Hearne was present, but could not prevent, he having had apparently little influence over his brutal companions.

One instance of their good faith may be noticed. In 1849 I asked one of the natives to bring a pair of boots for me to the "Bloody Fall," where he said he would be about the time of our return from the coast. Circumstances detained us, and when we came to the Fall the Esquimaux were gone, but on a long pole firmly secured in a cleft of the rock, hung a beautiful pair of new boots made to measure. The boots were taken, and the value of at least ten pairs left in their place.

In 1848, when I accompanied the boat expedition in search of Sir John Franklin, commanded by that very distinguished naturalist and Arctic traveller, Sir John Richardson, was the only occasion on which I had an opportunity of seeing the Esquimaux of the McKenzie River, who differ very much from those to the eastward, for they are as turbulent and fierce as the latter are peaceable and well-disposed. No boat parties of "white men" have ever descended the McKenzie into the Arctic Sea, or have proceeded along the coast westward, without an attack, or an attempt at attack, being made upon them.

They pillaged Franklin's boat in 1826, and were only induced to desist and return the plunder by the pointed guns and cool front shown by the crew of the boat under charge of Lieutenant (now Sir George) Back, which managed to push into deep water, and by the eloquence and courage of Augustus the interpreter. They attempted to attack Dease and Simpson's boats in 1836-7; they made Pullen's party in 1849 leave the shore in great haste with the loss of his boat's anchors, and in 1848 came off to the number of three hundred or more in oomiaks (large boats) and kayaks, chased the boats under Sir J. Richardson, boarded one of them which by accident was some distance behind, and began to pillage, when they were driven away by the return of the two boats that were in advance, and firing one or two loaded muskets over their heads.

Fortunately the oomiaks, which were full of people, could not come up with us, except in the one single instance mentioned, but each boat was followed by a swarm of kayaks, the men in which clung to our gunwales, rudder, oars, or anything they could lay hold of in the most impudent manner, and a more fierce, daring, and truculent-looking set of fellows could not well be imagined. My steersman, who had assisted (when in Her Majesty's service) at the capture of many Malay pirates, said the pirates were not to be compared to them for fierceness.

As we got farther out to sea, the kayaks gradually left us, after several of them had got overset. No lives were, however,

lost, as they were turned right side up again by two of their companions, after a good ducking. They were not expert enough to right their kayaks after being overset, as the Greenlanders do. Of the height of these men we had no good means of judging, as they were seated in their canoes, but they were stout and broad-shouldered, with great strength of arm and hand. Any one seeing these savages when in an angry or excited mood, could readily believe in the probability that a horde of them may have destroyed the Norsemen, who peopled the ancient settlements of South Greenland. All the men wore cheek ornaments made of stone, ivory, or large coloured beads, which they readily sold at various prices, the ones most valued being those formed of beads.

The only reason I can assign for these Esquimaux being so different in temper and disposition from their countrymen to the east is, that they have always been at war with the Souchoux Indians, who hunt on the lands in proximity to the sea coast. These Indians are a brave race, who speak of the traders (from whom they obtain guns and ammunition) as their friends. The Esquimaux naturally enough look upon both as their enemies. Their warlike or turbulent spirit may also have been kept up by their being able to live together in one large community near the mouth of the McKenzie in consequence of the great quantity of different kinds of food they are able to obtain there; whilst, on other parts of the coast, where food is less abundant, the natives are obliged to separate into small bands or families. More friendly relations have now been commenced on the McKenzie, as a trading-port has been established near its mouth, to which the Esquimaux resort.

The natives of the Danish settlements of Greenland may be considered civilised as far as they can be in such a country and climate. They are employed as boatmen and domestics, and are close attendants at the Lutheran church. Most of the young women can read, write, and sing well, and have even learnt to dance polkas and waltzes, which they have been taught by the Danish sailors. They have not yet, however, arrived at the luxury of crinolines. The dress of the men differs but little from that already described, except that the coat is made of seal skin, or stout cotton lined with bird skins or eider down instead of deer skin, and often without the flap or tail at the back. The breeches are also of seal skin. The women's dress consists of a tight-fitting, round jacket of strong coloured cotton lined with eider down or bird skins, with hood; a pair of seal-skin breeches, and boots fitting tightly at the leg, meeting these at the knee. Their hair is all gathered together on the crown of the head, and tied in a bunch or top knot, with a piece of coloured ribbon or

worsted stuff. A married woman uses this fastening of blue, a widow black, and a maid red. Green is also used by some.*

Being frozen in at the head of one of the fiords for some days, we stayed at the house of an old Esquimaux said to be of mixed origin, who kept a cow or two, and gave us excellent milk every morning and evening with our coffee, and from whom we bought a sheep in as fine a condition as I ever saw in the London market, being almost too fat. The mutton cost us about sixpence a pound. The favourite drink of these people is coffee with molasses or brown sugar, and they use a large amount of rye bread, imported from Denmark and sold to them at a very moderate price, which may be readily done, as the voyage is not long and there is no inland transport. Their traffic with the Danes is carried on in a very simple and satisfactory manner, by means of small notes varying in value from one penny halfpenny to several dollars. These notes are given in exchange for their oil skins, furs, ivory, eider down, etc., and then taken to the shop, where they purchase what they require.

One at least of their old customs has been retained. When a seal is killed, the wife of the successful hunter, before skinning the animal, cuts off one or more long strips of the fat and skin together, which are distributed in small pieces to every child at the place that likes to come or send for it. When two seals are killed two pieces are given, and so on.†

Few natives of South Greenland are said to be of pure blood—it having a Danish mixture. All the Esquimaux with whom I have communicated on the subject state that they originally came from the west or setting sun, and that in doing so, very long ago, they crossed a sea separating two great lands. That they are all of the same origin may be inferred from the similarity of their appearance, of their habits modified by the circumstances in which they have been placed, and by their language being so much alike that Esquimaux from the east coast of Hudson's Bay can understand and communicate without difficulty with those of McKenzie River, some thousand miles of coast line apart. That these people have been driven from their own country, in the northern parts of Asia, by some unknown pressure of circumstances, and obliged to extend themselves along the whole northern coast line of America and shores of Greenland, appears to be likely, and that the route followed, after crossing Behring's Straits, was along the coast. Being hemmed in by hostile Indians on the south, and driven forward by pressure from the west, they

* This mark of tying the hair in different colours originated with the missionaries.

† This is said to be done with only two kinds of seal.

had in part, when they reached the meridian of Banks Land, crossed to it, and to Wollaston Land, and thence to the Parry group of islands to the north (on all of which we know that animal life—in the form of musk cattle, reindeer, and smaller game—is abundant), and travelling eastward, finally reached Greenland, after crossing the intervening straits and sounds; or by coming round by North Somerset, and then across Lancaster Sound or Barrow Strait.

An ingenious theory has been started to show that Greenland may have been peopled by the Esquimaux coming direct across the ice-covered sea from Asia to Banks Land and the Parry Islands, but the idea appears to have little to support it, beyond the supposition that there are many islands or much land not far distant to the north and north-west. The reason assigned for this belief, is the immense thickness of the ice forced on or near the north-west shores of the Parry Islands, which it is supposed would drift away if not held in by land. From the fact of the very great accumulation of ice in this position, I should arrive at the very opposite conclusion, namely, that to the north-west there is a large extent of sea, and that the pressure of great bodies of ice driven by the prevailing north-west and westerly gales had forced it into large heaps so hard and fast aground, that for ages no gales from an opposite direction could remove it.

Whenever Indians or Esquimaux have to depend on land animals principally for food, they are much more liable to suffer privation and require to be much more nomadic than those who rely upon marine animals, or the produce of large lakes for subsistence.

Deer and musk cattle are migratory and sometimes uncertain in the routes they follow. As an instance; the early setting in of winter, by freezing the lakes at the time of the southern migration of the reindeer, destroys the most productive source of obtaining a winter stock of food to the natives of Repulse Bay, because the deer are then enabled to cross the lakes on the ice at any place instead of swimming over at certain favourite passes, where they are easily speared, occasionally a whole herd at a time. The Esquimaux near the McKenzie River and westward, and also those of Greenland, have oomiaks or large boats. Those of the Coppermine and eastward to Hudson's Bay have only the kayak or one man canoe.

In the construction of their winter houses the Esquimaux seem to have been influenced by circumstances. In Greenland, where usually an abundance of fuel from the walrus, seal, and whale can be obtained, their huts are made of earth, stones, moss, bones, etc., which, without a fire, would make a cold habitation. Along the coast westward from the McKenzie, and some distance

eastward of that river, wood houses are built, because wood is abundant, whilst eastward of the Coppermine, as far as Hudson's Bay, where there is little or no wood, and comparatively a small amount of oil-bearing marine animals, the snowhouse forms the winter shelter, because without fuel it is warmer than either of the others.

I have to regret that, in consequence of not having my rough notes by me, I am unable to mention several incidents which I cannot trust my memory to give correctly, which would in some measure tend to make this paper a little less incomplete. I may conclude by saying that the more I saw of the Esquimaux the higher was the opinion I formed of them, and that they were much more susceptible of civilising influences than any of the Indian tribes I had met.

In this favourable opinion I am borne out by the experience of the Danes in Greenland, by the Moravians in Labrador, and in Hudson's Bay, both at Churchill and on the east main coast; also by the conduct of the interpreters employed on Arctic service; among whom I shall mention only the gallant and faithful Augustus, who perished in a bold and determined effort (after his companions had turned back) to reach one of his former masters, Sir George Back, at Fort Reliance, in winter 1832-3; old Oulig-buck, as brave a man as I ever met; and the amiable, active, and honest Albert, who was drowned in consequence of his too great zeal, by the upsetting of a boat on the Coppermine River in 1849. All these were true and trustworthy as any white or civilised man could be.
